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Dockets Management Branch,

1-17-2000

I am writing in regard to product labeling as it relates to celiacs. My son has been diagnosed with celiac disease. This disease causes stunting of growth, malnutrition, diarrhea as well as leads to some types of colon cancer. Many celiacs have other related conditions also which make their lives difficult if they do not eat a proper diet. The diet that is necessary is one free of wheat, barley, oats, rye, and gluten. These ingredients are found in an amazing number of foods. The real difficulty arises when foods are not fully labeled.

Many foods do not indicate the ingredients in spices, food starch, colorings, or flavorings. All these can contain ingredients which a celiac cannot eat. Also the ways a food is processed can make it harmful to a celiac. If, for instance, a food travels down a conveyor belt coated with flour, it will be a food that can not be eaten by a celiac. Therefore processing aids need to be identified also even though they are not in the finished food. Additives which are incidental also need to be identified. While they may seem incidental to the manufacturer, they are not to person suffering from celiac disease.

I recognize that manufacturers would not like to go to the extra trouble to change labels, but this issue greatly affects many children. The disease was not readily recognized prior to 1977 and doctors were therefore not trained to recognize it. Now it is being diagnosed more readily and more people find themselves affected. (So others with food "allergies" would surely appreciate more precise labeling)

It is hard to imagine the difficulty shopping for a child with celiac when you cannot determine ingredients unless you call the manufacturer. Some are helpful and some are not. It is difficult enough to tell a child he cannot have bread, canned soups, noodles, pasta etc. that he may have come to love. But not being able to know what you definitely can rely on as safe makes it harder.

PLEASE help by requiring manufacturers to label all ingredients including flavorings, spices, coloring, modified food starch. Also have them identified processing ingredients.

Sincerely,

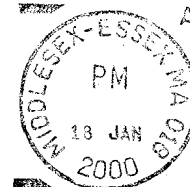
*Martha Walton*

Martha Walton  
344 Ocean Ave.  
Marblehead, MA  
01945

*ce7*

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Walton  
344 Ocean  
Marblehead  
Ma. 01945



Docket  
Management Branch (HFA-30S)  
Food & Drug Administration  
5630 Fishers Lane  
Room 301  
Rockville, MD 20857-2000

